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WHY WE CHRISTIANS
BELIEVE IN CHRIST

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WHY WE CHRISTIANS
BELIEVE IN CHRIST
BISHOP GORE'S BAMPTON
LECTURES SHORTENED
FOR POPULAR USE

BY THE REV. T. C. FRY, D.D.

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PREFACE

THE deep interest awakened by the publication of Bishop Gore's well-known Bampton Lectures, and the wide circulation that they have had amongst that class of the reading public which can afford to buy expensive books, have induced me, with the author's leave, to reduce them to a more concise and cheaper form, in order to bring them within the means of a still wider, but no less appreciative public, including working men and women. In days when the teaching of the Church is often misunderstood, if not misrepresented, the sincerity and clearness of these lectures will be welcome, even to those who differ from Bishop Gore, and doubly welcome to those who agree with him, but who cannot afford them in their original shape. May I add that any profits from the undertaking will be given to the fund for the Bishopric of Birmingham?

T. C. FRY.

November, 1903.



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I

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

WHAT is it that marks out Christianity from other religions? It is faith in a person—Jesus Christ: a faith so thorough that we give ourselves up to His guidance because faith in Him is held to be faith in God, union with Him is held to be union with God.

True Christianity is faith in a person: our own weakness we know; we believe Him able to redeem us: the closer we follow, the more character is changed.

At times men have made of Christianity devotion not to a person, but to theology or church duties; so the best fruits of the Christian religion have been lost. To a true Churchman, behind Church doctrine and duties stands an unseen but present

Lord. At other times men have exalted overmuch other Christian saints in place of Jesus Christ. So compassion has been allotted to His mother, and justice to Him. But this compassion, separated from severity where severity is needed, becomes a weak sentiment; the tenderness in His character, united with strong manhood, is forgotten: the wine of Christianity is mixed with water.

Again, too much has at times been made of feeling in religion. Feeling, such as peace and joy, God indeed gives: but religion is not mere feeling, and to keep on searching into our feelings is not the best way of testing our faith. It is service that our Lord claims: in service the thought of mere personal feeling must be swallowed up. To serve Christ, not merely to feel Christ, is the mark of His servants. Again, the service of man may lead men, though they use Christ's name, to say that doctrine does not matter. But our labour and our hope depend on what we believe of Christ's person and work. Otherwise zeal for work may be only zeal for our own work, not for His: our work may not touch

the springs of character ; it may not be really zeal for Christ.

Once again, we may turn our Christianity into philosophy : we may give our interest not to a person—Jesus Christ—but to theories about Him ; and so we weaken His appeal to the heart. Nothing can keep us from this but constant prayer, constant looking, with our minds and hearts, upon the Christ of the gospels.

Christianity is, in fact, Christ. Mohammed does not hold this place in Mohammedanism, nor Moses in Judaism. They professed to be prophets, to speak the word of the Lord—no more. The founder of Buddhism taught “ a way of salvation,” and then, according to his own scriptures, passed in death utterly away. But Jesus Christ offered Himself to men on earth as “ the Way,” and after death He promised His presence and His life. His person, and men’s relation to Him, is the very heart of His religion. This is what Christendom believes : that is what the gospels clearly show that He taught and claimed. This is plain enough, if we watch how He trained His chosen Apostles. Some of these

Apostles heard the witness of their former master, John the Baptist, to Him "whose shoe-latchet he was unworthy to loose." They were drawn to Christ by the attraction of His personality. Gradually, through their knowledge of Him as man, they came to believe in Him as more than man. He spoke to the conscience with authority, not as a servant, but as a Son. In the midst of such teaching He made a claim to judge at the last men's secret lives; and this claim was so much of a piece with the rest of His words and life that they could not but accept it: at last they came to trust Him utterly, as unerring Friend and all-powerful Guide.

A mere man must always point away from himself to God: must feel his own unworthiness: must make light of his own personal claims; but Jesus never spoke of Himself as liable to sin, and pointed all men to Himself. Gradually He led His Apostles to trust Him as they would trust God. Mere compliment, indeed, He rejected; but He soon claimed and encouraged words of intense devotion. Before His death, no doubt, the faith of His Apostles was dim, and for the

moment the death upon the cross crushed it down. They believed with slowness and difficulty in their risen Lord. But, once convinced, they stood upon a rock from which nothing could afterwards dislodge them. And after Pentecost they had no doubt at all that He, as Son of God, claimed their whole faith and worship; that worship of Him was not idolatry, but that through Him they had union with God Himself by the Spirit which He had given them.

There are men who cannot accept the Christian creed, but are anxious to maintain religion in their own lives and in society. They are unwilling to consider fairly in what the real strength of Christianity has lain. But facts must be faced; and, whether Christianity is true or not, there is no doubt of what it is. Christianity is faith in Jesus Christ as God incarnate—*i.e.* God manifest in the flesh: it differs from other religions by its members' attitude to Him; and this attitude is fully justified by the witness of the gospels.

There are, of course, some who wish to sever Christianity from what they call dogma—*i.e.* from definite statements in theology; but there are

four things that they are asked to consider. Man, having reason, demands an account of things. If, for instance, a man is told that he *must*, he seeks to know why he *must*. So reasoned morality grows up. In like manner the first Christians asked themselves why they treated Jesus Christ as they treated no one else. They could not help seeking and giving reasons for it. Directly they found the reasons in His being to them God, dogma grew up: people attack this as "metaphysics," but metaphysics merely mean that man, being rational, is seeking to give the inner reasons of his experience and belief.

Secondly, Christianity is good news because it is so simple: it reaches all. But this simple Gospel is good news because the story it tells has a divine lesson in it. It becomes a gospel because in that simple story it is the Son of God who died for love of man: because, after death, God raised Him to life. However simple, it includes the truth that Jesus Christ is God.

Thirdly, there are men who are hostile to our theology, but are enthusiastic about Christian morality. They feel the danger in which morality

seems to be in England to-day. The neglect of the true education of children, the neglect of the marriage-tie and of the claims of a pure life, the want of a sense of the sin of suicide, the want of moral ideals when men act in masses, men are alarmed at these things: they cling to an unbending moral law. But Jesus Christ cannot be a standard for all men unless He is more than one man amongst many. His claim demands an explanation.

Fourthly, it must be remembered that on the person of Christ the Church has spoken beyond recall. She has not done so about atonement or inspiration. But about Christ's person she is perfectly definite; and by her words she must stand or fall. It is this that makes all thought upon this subject a very serious thing. The enquiry is serious, and therefore the enquiry must be real.

II

CHRIST SUPERNATURAL YET NATURAL

JESUS CHRIST, as the Church presents Him to us, is a supernatural person. Because He is this, men believe in Him: because He is this, men reject Him. It is, some say, unnatural to be supernatural. Nature, we most of us believe, is a voice of God. Is, then, that voice for Christ or against Him?

Let us first clear our ground a little. There are some who deny that nature gives evidence for a God. Mind, they say, is only organised matter: nature witnesses only to a force that works by constant laws. Nature reveals no mind, no purpose, no being behind itself.

The atheist (if there is one) and the agnostic

hold that if Christ is supernatural He is unintelligible—outside, in fact, the “nature” that he himself sees. But then his “nature” shuts out important facts : he refuses to believe in mind at all as something else than matter. Modern science has modified the old-fashioned proofs of purpose in nature, but has not taken out of nature the argument for mind nor the witness that the beauty in nature bears to a spiritual Being behind nature Who knows what beauty is.

Again, conscience witnesses to a superhuman law of right and to some free will in man, without which no moral duty has a claim on him.

Again, the mind and righteousness revealed in nature witness to a person, without which the words themselves are meaningless. What, then, is the witness of nature to a supernatural Christ ? Nature is orderly and one ; it is also progressive—from animal life to rational life. This development reveals God. Christians believe that this evolution reached a climax in Christ. Inorganic nature witnesses to God’s vast unchangeable power and wisdom ; organic nature to His life : human nature gives glimpses of His

mind and character ; Christ confirms and completes all by showing us His divine character and love. A Christ, then, inconsistent with nature man's reason could have found no place for : but if, while surpassing nature apart from Himself, He is yet in harmony with it, how should experience reject Him ?

But some one may ask, How does Christ complete a world otherwise imperfect ? If goodness, love, righteousness reveal God better than motion of stars or life of plants, then without Christ the world is a fragment : we want some further witness than nature without Him gives us. If character and personality are God's best image, then we are in measure prepared for the incarnation.

Christ, then, is nature's crown : He is, therefore, in a deep sense, natural : both in Him and, partly seen, partly hidden, in nature are spiritual realities which are akin. But is He above nature ? That depends on what we mean by nature. Each new advance of life in nature appears supernatural when viewed from below. Moral life is supernatural when viewed from the stage of physical

life. So Christ is supernatural compared with mere man. The same force is at work all through, for the force of all things is God: only God is revealed by degrees, and at last, in the highest degree, in Christ.

But the work of Christ is not only to complete, but to redeem. If we believe that God is good and that man has sinned, the thought of a redeemer is natural. Sin is not natural: it is the rebellion of free wills; it is lawlessness—a taint in our nature. The more clearly we see this, the more readily shall we believe in a redeemer.

Nor let us forget that by over-close devotion of mind to other channels of thought we may find atrophied and wasted the faculties that we cease to use. Literary study, business, athletics, pleasure may be so indulged in as to stunt the moral powers: Christ may seem unreal and far away. But a sense of sin, the desire for righteousness, the sense of God and of eternity, bring Christ near again. So, too, can sorrow or social enthusiasm, a sense of life's vanities, or the death of some one beloved. It is He alone Whom we then find able to cure human ills. Christ, then, by surpassing

nature is supernatural; but He is natural as needed to meet men's yearnings and restore nature's order.

To this conclusion there are three possible objections. Men may say: How is it, then, that Christ's work has been opposed to nature? It is because "nature" has been used in two senses: first, as the ordered world; secondly, as disordered human society. The best Christian teaching has always taught that nature and grace, creation and redemption, are one. S. Paul and S. John both taught that Creator and Redeemer are one. Christ is the maker, the sustainer, the goal of the world. By His incarnation He planted a new kingdom of grace in the old kingdom of nature. The Greek Fathers who developed this thought taught that God's work in nature and in grace was one. God is in nature. He is, similarly, though more intensely, in Christ. They even found joy in nature because it revealed the same God who was revealed in Christ. Everywhere, they held, was order and law. Even modern science, with its clearer view of details, does not hold the principle of order more strongly than these early

Christian teachers. They also taught that the coming of God in the flesh gathered into one all God's earlier working. Greek philosophy and Jewish law had been a preparation for it. We only carry their ideas further when we believe that the religion of Christ supersedes all other religions, because it includes the elements of truth that each contains.

A second objection to our argument is made on the score of miracles. Miracles, it is said, are a violation of law, and so are contrary to order. Each miracle, of course, must be judged by its own evidence; but if we once admit man's sin and also God's will in nature working for moral ends; if we admit that God is a redeemer and that man needs a redeemer, we at least make miracle credible and rational. For a miracle is an event in physical nature that makes plain God's working for a moral end. It is a "sign" that man sees, a "sign" of personal will. God breaks into the common order to teach men the true character of the order which they see. God thus protests against man's blindness to Himself.

We must, of course, apply tests to miracles: we

do not see God in mere portents, or in unworthy miracles, or in such as are against moral discipline. But the miracles that Christ wrought are not such as these. Indeed, the incarnate Son of God could not but be miraculous. Nature is a progressive order: it admits of new departures, sudden rises of level, new phenomena. When life first appeared, when rational life first appeared, "the future did not resemble the past." Christ, we believe, is a new nature: He will therefore show forth new phenomena. A new nature works in Him with a new power. In His case miracles appear natural: they are redemptive acts, object-lessons of mercy and judgment. His words and His works are one, as body and soul are one. Without them it is hard to see how He could have revealed Himself. Without the resurrection, His death would have been an obstacle to faith in Him.

But men may then say: Yes, but your Christ is no permanent part of nature, as organic life is. He is alone and isolated: we cannot believe in an isolated Christ. It is true that we look back to Christ: but moral and mental progress is never a gradual, continued, upward rise. In history

geniuses have no worthy successors. Even if He were but man, Jesus Christ remains isolated. And if He be God incarnate, He must be isolated. There can be no second like Him. But He can give a share of life to men, and He has done so. We believe that, when His work is complete, He will be no longer isolated : He will be the Head of a redeemed humanity. The truth is that the history of man is but a first volume : it calls for a second. The second volume is Christ. In Him the whole is intelligible. But a third is still to come—"the one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

III

THE SUPERNATURAL CHRIST HISTORICAL

HISTORY witnesses to Christ : but external testimony, even when very good, does not always convince. The thing witnessed to must be credible. We believe that a man has seen a flying fish ; we do not believe that a man has seen a mermaid. No one will believe on external evidence that Jesus Christ rose from the dead if He is not alive to the bearing of such a fact upon a belief in redemption. The Christian witness appeals to the Christian spirit even while the Christian faith depends on the witness. Readiness to submit to evidence is not a common quality : so many have prejudices. It is, of course, absurd to say that in examining evidence we can quite

silence the wish to believe or to disbelieve ; but at least it is our duty to strive to submit to evidence. Indeed, as to this we may be hopeful : Christians in England are certainly more candid and fair.

Jesus Christ clearly meant belief to rest on inner faith and outward witness. He taught by events : He made His apostles witnesses ; but His appeal He made to faith. It was based on evidence, but still faith. We approach, then, the evidence with willingness to believe, with acknowledgment of the need of redemption, with a heart's desire for God's word, but resolved, too, to surrender to the results of real enquiry.

Let us, if we are wise, begin with the four most recognised epistles of S. Paul, Galatians, Romans, and Corinthians. In these S. Paul clearly teaches that Christ is one with God in all divine functions : S. Paul is a Jew ; he could not so write if he did not believe that Christ was Himself divine. He honours Christ thus because He was, he believed, God before His human birth. This is to teach the incarnation. He is first divine, then human. But as He revealed Himself, He is first human, then divine. This

belief rested in part on His works, in part on His holiness. Although S. Paul gives no such detailed life of Christ as we find in the gospels, yet it is clear from his words that he had done so in his first teaching : he reminds his converts of this. These epistles date from 57 or 58 A.D.; but the belief goes back to his conversion, twenty years before—ten years after the resurrection. Even his opponents, the Judaizers, never opposed this faith. If we could be carried back amongst these earliest Christian teachers, we should find our beliefs to be as theirs as to Christ's person, works, and resurrection.

The next question is, Do the Gospels give us the original story? Let us first take S. Mark. Can we give this gospel a date? Mr. Estlin Carpenter, who does not hold our theology, gives 70 A.D. This gospel lies at the root of S. Matthew and S. Luke. We get in it as near as we can to the earliest tradition.

As we read it, it seems simple and true: it reads like the word of simple and faithful memories. The age, the place, the people whence it sprang do not lead us to believe in any power

of theirs to create such a book out of their imagination. Yet the picture of Christ is unequalled. If not true, it demands a supreme imagination to have created it. The legends about Christ that we possess are of quite a different character. Papias, who lived very near that age, writes that S. Mark gave the "teaching of Peter." There is no reason to doubt this: indeed, every reason to believe it. What do we find in it? A miraculous history: supreme works that we cannot explain away: a witness to Christ's authority: a witness to something behind appearances which He did not freely disclose. It is, all through, the gospel of such an One as S. Paul taught of. The Christ of this earliest witness is the Christ of the Apostles' Creed.

S. Luke gives us in his first few verses an account, as true as it is simple, of how our written gospels grew. "Eyewitnesses and ministers" first delivered the word: then Christians were taught orally by catechists. Soon many began to write the familiar record. S. Luke himself, having special sources of knowledge of our Lord's life, offers to Theophilus an orderly narrative as

a trustworthy account of the faith. Behind the written gospels, then, is the apostolic message, taught with authority and enshrined in the memory of Churches.

At this point a judgment must be pronounced as to S. John's Gospel. It is surely those who deny, and not those who accept, S. John's authorship who do violence to the evidence. Both external and internal evidence unite to press it home upon S. John—"the disciple whom Jesus loved." Of course, this has been, and still is, denied: but each man must examine and speak for himself. This we accept, on an examination of the evidence and with sincere conviction, as the witness of the old apostle.

Fifty years of meditation, many years of teaching since Jesus left the world, have made distinct and clear-cut in his memory the person, the words, the deeds of his friend, his Master, his God. He is at Ephesus, a half-Greek, half-Asiatic city; and men are seeking to explain Jesus Christ, not as man, nor as God made man, but as some mysterious, semi-divine outflow from the divine source of all life.

The problem was, Who was Jesus? The Word made flesh. The questioners in S. John's new home understood his terms. Some then used the word "Word" to mean the divine reason which moulded the world. But others—Jews in Palestine—meant by it the divine power manifested in action. And this is what S. John means. So he passes on to give the memories on which this witness is founded. And the chief interest of his gospel lies in his record of our Lord's discourses and their witness to His divine nature.

We need not dwell on their exact form. The age in which the Apostle lived allowed great freedom in giving speeches. It is quite possible that the speeches are cast in S. John's own vocabulary and coloured by his own mind. But, if he was the friend of Jesus and the quickest to understand His meaning, we cannot doubt that the substance is Christ's. If not, we cannot account for the faith of the Churches as shown in S. Paul's epistles. Nor can we forget that the other gospels have sayings in them which equally imply Christ's divinity. Further,

John's Gospel is the only one which is written in the first person.

His claim to judge the world cannot be severed from a claim to divine being: we have but to suppose that Christ's deeper sayings were best retained and recorded by S. John, upon whose mind they made the strongest impression.

In all these lines of witness—S. John's, S. Paul's, the other gospels'—there is no sign of a mere natural man, Jesus, hidden behind and slowly evolved into the Son of God, born in the flesh, whom the Church believes in. It is those who deny the faith who do violence to the evidence.

But can we trust the capacity of the Apostles and first disciples? Have we not first-hand evidence for multitudes of miracles in the middle ages? Why specially trust one man's disciples? We may allow that there have been uncritical and superstitious witnesses; but surely in any history of testimony the Apostles would take high rank. They were men of the independent trading class, simple, unromantic, not morbid, slow of belief, not easily led one way, not (save perhaps S. John and certainly S. Paul) great theologians: in fact, excellent witnesses—plain

men with an eye for facts, telling a plain tale, and showing by their lives how they believed it. And to give witness Christ trained them from the first. And who were their critics? Sadducees, sceptical politicians, always sharp critics of the supernatural. And what was their witness? How original it was! For the sort of miracles Jesus did there was no previous pattern—no pattern, either, of a resurrection body. Mere visions can be generally explained out of images already in the mind; and the lives of visionaries can mostly be explained without the visions. Not so the Apostles. Their later lives rest on the resurrection. Visions do not transform life. The more you consider them as witnesses, the more you will trust them. Their very fairness to foe as to friend makes them trustworthy. There is one event the Apostles gave no witness to: it is Christ's birth of a Virgin. They did not preach it because they only preached what they had witnessed from the baptism of John to the ascension. They had no knowledge given them to start with of His birth. But still, as believers, His birth must have interested them. Joseph

and Mary could give evidence on it. Read S. Matthew's account: is it not all from the side of Joseph? Read St. Luke's: is it not all from the side of Mary? They agree, too, in the Virgin birth at Bethlehem. The earliest traditions of East and West accept it. To Christians it has seemed that so it must have been. Thus approached, is there any ground for disbelieving it? We may say our creed in confidence: we can face the facts: the witness standeth sure.

IV

THE CHRIST OF DOGMA THE CHRIST OF SCRIPTURE

So far we have tested our faith at the bar of nature and the bar of history. We are now to ask what the faith means, and in so doing we shall use the terms of the creeds and the decisions of the great Councils of the Church.

The Creed asserts four propositions : (1) that, as Son of God, Jesus Christ is very God, of one substance with the Father ; (2) that, as Son of Man, He is perfect man, complete in human faculties and sympathies ; (3) that, though both God and man, He is yet one person—*viz.* the Son of God who has taken manhood into Himself ; (4) that the manhood still remains truly human, so that Jesus Christ is, in His manhood, of one

substance with us, as, in His Godhead, He is one with the Father.

Of these ancient definitions different views are taken. The English Church looks on them as summaries of the original faith, necessary as guides to statements scattered in the Scriptures; summaries going back to the Scriptures for proof, guarding the faith from being undermined, but making no addition to it. Some writers of the Roman Church, seeing that early Christianity did not recognise recent teaching of their own communion, have said that there has always been a development going on, and that the teaching in these four propositions was itself a development. This view has also been maintained by the opposite school of thought. There are those who say that Christianity began as a moral and spiritual "way of life," and that it developed by using the terms and adopting the ideas of Greek thinkers: they suggest that true Christianity only consists in the Sermon on the Mount and the spirit of brotherhood.

Can we trace the connection between the Church of the New Testament and the Church of

the Councils? The early Churches were a confederation united by a common faith and a common rule of life. They believed, as we have seen, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in the incarnation. This faith formed a basis of union : we see it in the New Testament and in the letters of S. Clement and S. Ignatius. No historian can say that primitive Christianity was no more than the Sermon on the Mount. The early Christians believed it their duty to hold fast to the end God's full revelation of Himself. But this revelation, they knew, was a faith, and not as yet ordered knowledge. Then the Church was questioned, mainly at first by those called gnostics. These men believed in rival gods, denounced the material world, denied a real incarnation, looked down on faith as compared with speculation. Would the Church admit them to mould her creed? Would she admit those who looked on Christ as no more than a prophet? There were others who regarded Christ as a deified man. Thus it came about that she was driven, in answer to questions, to define her creed. She came to hold it with clear consciousness of its

intellectual meaning. She kept her middle way and held her faith in God as Three in One, and in Christ, God and Man.

Here, then, we see, as nowhere else so well, the mind of a society forming itself. There is one steady current moving, one faith being ever more clearly expressed. At the Councils there may have been the strife of contending views; but out of it came a strong, consistent framework of truth. In the result there are balance and moderation. The student of deep influences cannot help feeling that something more than appears has been at work here. The terms and language may be that of Greek philosophical schools, but they faithfully represent the old creed of the Apostles. When the Church asserted that Christ was of "one substance" with the Father, her aim was quite practical. If God, He must be very God, she felt, for God must be One. It was enough for her that, as He was really man, so He was really God. It is to the first decision of the Church about dogma that we owe it that faith in Christ did not become faith in a demi-god.

The next step was taken when Apollinarius asked how Christ could be human and yet unalterable, and in answer suggested that the Godhead took the place in Christ of the human mind. Again the Church met him with a plain No: she refused to let Christ's humanity be explained away. He was, in her faith, completely man.

But then, said others, how was the union of Godhead and manhood to be thought of? Surely to be man, Christ must be a free human person. God was united to Him at manhood, in His baptism, in an exceptional way. This was to make Christ a deified man, not God incarnate. This theory, then, of Nestorius was also rejected. Jesus Christ, as born of Mary, was God incarnate.

But does, then, the human nature remain? No, said Eutyches, the manhood loses its own proper nature. At Chalcedon the Church rejected this. The manhood in Christ, she taught, remained what it was: the eternal person takes human nature and acts through it without its ceasing to be human.

These are the Church's decrees: they express

in a new form the faith of the Apostles ; they reject error as to what her faith meant ; they give us nothing that is not already given, less explicitly, in St. Paul's letters. The Church borrowed from Greek thought, not her creed, but the terms she used to define it. Even then, to meet the new needs, she had at times to give a new shade of meaning to the terms used. She could not help this : no better terms existed to define her faith by.

Let us remember three things. These definitions are meant to say No rather than Yes. They blocked out the wrong lines of development. They were not meant to give us positive knowledge of Christ or to override the gospel picture. Secondly, the Fathers thought that only necessity justified these decisions. A new word was in itself suspected. Over-dogmatising, like over-legislating, is an evil. Thirdly, let us notice that, if the intellect is too much appealed to, it is the heretical teachers who did so. The Church's object was only to guard a tradition : not by logic, but by sympathy, does she strive to enter into truth.

V

GOD REVEALED IN CHRIST

THE Son reveals the Father : Christ whom we see reveals the unseen God. His character is God's character : He is God's likeness : in Him we see God. Man, in being united to God, is to know God ; and here all depends on what Christ is. Christ does not merely give us news about God : being God, He reveals God. In Him dwells not one quality only of God, but the fulness of God. This knowledge of God is given to us men through Christ's manhood. He teaches us that God is a person. This, of course, the Old Testament had intimated ; but the New Testament makes it intensely certain, and equally certain that man is a person too. In Christ this personality is not an accident : it is His eternal nature. He was

from all eternity Son. Whatever else God is, however greater than we can conceive, He is at least personal. He has shown us this in a human nature. He also has shown us that this divine person is essentially love. He has taught us the Fatherhood of God. Apart from Christ the world gives no sure proof of this. Physical nature is stern; human nature can be cruel, selfish, lustful: but if God is love, love made the world, and love will be its goal. In Christ love is victorious through death, and in Him we see the Father.

This gospel lies not in arguments or miracles, but in Christ's person. He took on Himself all that tells against it, and on the Cross showed forth by self-sacrifice the depth of the divine love. Behind the sorrow and the travail lie God's love and God's victory.

But in Him God's love is not severed from His other qualities. God is both true and just. His love goes out to redeem men into His fellowship: therefore His love is not mere benevolence, but the outcome of a holiness that inspires awe. It has in it the element of judgment. God will go

all lengths of self-sacrifice, but sin He cannot admit. We can trust Him utterly to give, in this life or the next, a chance to all men ; but at the last, when the last comes, He must deal with souls according to their chances.

There is a moral law that who will not at last cannot. Will forms habits, habits characters, and character is indelible. There are laws in the spiritual as in the natural world. Prayer, for instance, cannot drag God down to our desires ; prayer must be according to faith in Christ. If you examine the Lord's Prayer you will see this ; only one bare need—"our daily bread." God works by law : nowhere is this plainer than in the words of Christ and the circumstances of His coming.

He comes in the fulness of time : His works are the outcome of His nature ; they follow the law of faith. He submits, down to His death, to law : He used no power to save Himself.

What is true of Christ is true of His Church. He trained His Apostles as each character demanded. He has been supernaturally present with His Church but she has been subject to the

process of the world's order. So, too, in the Church of the Old Testament we see a gradual unveiling of God's truth. This is the divine method, alike in the spiritual and the natural world.

Augustine himself suggested that nature was gradually evolved out of germs: modern science, we know, confirms his guess. God is above nature, but He is also within it. Nature's laws express His mind. Such laws are only limits of God so far as they express that law of perfect reason which is the law of His own mind.

This thought of God has never vanished from the best theology. The spirit of imperialism made Him an unfettered monarch. Calvinism made Him arbitrary. Luther obscured His being by a theory of unreal merit imputed to man—a lawless and unaccountable action. English theology in the eighteenth century banished God out of a machine-like nature.

The common tendency is to see God in portents rather than in order and law: His omnipotence has seemed to mean that He can do anything anyhow. But the best theology has held that

God has always acted and still acts by law and method. No one can reveal His mind without revealing something of His inner self. Thus, in revealing God, our Lord gave insight into His inner being: this the Church expressed in her doctrine of the Trinity. He did not expressly reveal the doctrine. In their gradual intercourse His disciples recognised Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as included in their thought of God. The process cannot be described; but at last, without doubt of the divine unity, they included in their thought of it the Three Persons. So, too, did the baptismal formula include them in the name of one God. The Apostles found, no difficulty, seemingly. That is because logic does not trouble where experience is in question. If we feel that things are real, logic cannot alter our conviction. When the Church defined the doctrine, she acknowledged freely that all human words are inadequate to describe the inscrutable being of God. She only wished to guard her trust of truth.

This doctrine of the Trinity is not discoverable by reason, but agreeable to reason. God, we

believe, is an eternal and spiritual being. The life of spirit is made up of will, reason, and love. If God is eternal love, there must be an eternal object of His love. A life of reason demands an object of thought; an eternal mind demands an eternal object of thought. Will must issue in product: an eternal will in an eternally sufficient product. Reason tells us that God cannot be a monotonous unity, but must thus contain within Himself distinctions.

There are of course other views of God. Pantheism is one. It gives noble expression to God's presence in all things; but it knows not immortality, nor sin, nor sin's remedy. Mere Deism distinguishes God from the world, but leaves Him in blank solitude, with nothing to answer to His love, His reason, or His will. Christian theology harmonises the two. God is in all things present; but He does not depend upon the world: He exists, too, in Himself, with the Word and the Spirit eternally dwelling in His bosom. God is nature's life, but also its Creator, its Lord, its Judge.

So the Christian worships God behind nature's

veil, yet the eternal God. He sees all things in God : that is worship. The human world is like a restless sea, but there is purpose in it. All things move to the divine event. Unity, subordination, worship is the goal of all things.

VI

MAN REVEALED IN CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST reveals God: He also reveals man: He shows man to God and to himself. He shows what man can do and be: He is the great reality, the Son of man. The Church has asserted her belief that Christ is truly and completely man, acting through human faculties. This side of the truth about Christ has not always been enough dwelt upon in the Christian Church. We must constantly go back to the gospels, to the historical Jesus.

We know nothing of our Lord's education. Clearly He grew up a truly human child: His parents expected Him on their visit to Jerusalem in His thirteenth year to behave as a child would do. He seemed to the doctors marvellously

intelligent. He had even then a consciousness of divine Sonship, but it did not interfere with human growth. You see all this in S. Luke.

At His baptism, in connection with John the Baptist, through all His life of work, if we accept the gospels, we cannot doubt that He knew His eternal Sonship. Yet while He knows the Father as He is known of Him, He teaches under the conditions of human nature. His marvellous, even supernatural, illumination is still akin to that given to apostles and prophets. It is not divine omniscience ; it has apparent limitations of knowledge : He feels surprise : He prays with human faith : He feels the horror of the coming passion : He did not know the day and hour of His second coming. In S. John's Gospel He does "what the Father taught Him"; He receives and speaks under human limitations. He does not enlarge our knowledge of nature or of history out of omniscience. Clearly He was true and proper man.

There are theologians who give us a picture of a Christ subject to human growth of body, yet in soul and intellect in full enjoyment of divine and

complete insight: as knowing all things past, present, and future; never uncertain about anything. It must suffice to say that is not what the gospels lead us to believe.

Others assure us that Christ, being man, must have been at least liable to sin and fallible. But place yourself face to face with the Christ of the gospels: let His words, His claim, His tone make its natural impression on you. Will you find yourself able to think of Him as liable to sin or liable to mislead? He does not fear sin: He does not let us think of Himself as growing better: He speaks of Himself as the deliverer. He is the conqueror and the judge of sin: His tone is that of one who teaches without risk of mistake: He claims of right the submission of conscience, intellect, and will of man. Let us be true to the record, and try to combine into one the two sides of the evidence.

In the gospels we see in Jesus two lives. They are in strong contrast, yet not in disagreement. He dwells in and reveals His father: He also lives a human life. To see that these are one we must have clearly in view why and how He

became man. He became man, as the deliberate act of God, for our recovery. God must be revealed: the ideal of human nature must be shown forth. Humanity must therefore reflect the perfect God perfectly. His human nature was allowed to be subject to limitation, without defacing or distorting the revelation made. When He teaches, we may depend upon what He teaches; else the purpose of His coming would be marred. On the other hand, He is to show a true manhood. This must be tried, must progress, must be perfected. Human experience must be possible: hence He is without such divine rights and powers as make that impossible.

Further, we have to understand the method of the incarnation. S. Paul calls it a self-emptying. Christ existed before the incarnation in the "form" of God. This word means the "permanent, essential character." This life was His of right: yet He did not clutch at it as a prize. For love He gave it up. He emptied Himself to take up the human life, the "form" of a servant. The outward fashion, too, of man He took. Thus remaining an unchanged person, He abandoned

certain prerogatives of divine existence. Elsewhere S. Paul calls it a self-beggary. On God's part, too, there is a surrender, a giving up of the Son. In accordance with this the record seems to assure us that our Lord in His mortal life was not habitually living in the exercise of omniscience.

Is this intelligible? In a measure it is. We, too, in our sympathy enter into the conditions of another's life. The teacher thus deals with the child; the educated with the savage. We can thus enter somewhat into it, though, of course, we can never understand all. We cannot exhaust what is, after all, a mystery. We are simply trying to do justice to every expression of Scripture.

Jesus Christ, then, is the Son of man, like and yet unlike to ourselves. In what is He unlike? (1) He is sinless. He was assailed, but He rejected temptation, not because He felt no force in it, but because His will followed unhesitatingly the Spirit of God. And since He was sinless, He was free. Sin is no part of man's true nature, for sin had no place in Christ. Through Him we, too, look forward to a like freedom. (2) In Jesus Christ

humanity was perfect. Man was made imperfect, fitted only to develop freely. In Christ man is completely God's image. (3) Jesus Christ is the universal man. He can be claimed by both sexes, all classes, all nations. Merely national customs He does not sanction. He handles Scripture as all men may do. The Greek, the Roman, the Teuton have, each in turn, found their ideal in Him.

In Christ we find our hopes for man justified. There is much in man to dishearten us ; there is much in ourselves : but in Him we find the condemnation of what we are, the assurance of what we may be. He is our authority, our example, our new life. The hope of progress for each man and all men lies with those who in simple loyalty follow His guidance.

VII

CHRIST OUR MASTER

No Christian can doubt where authority in religion lies. For him it lies in Jesus Christ. He reveals God with authority. As perfect man, He controls humanity. In the gospels He speaks with authority: "Verily I say unto you." The method of argument is important, of course; but it is not the basis of Christianity. It prepares the way, but it does not establish it. Religion comes from Christ's lips as the word of God.

Authority in religion implies some discipline of private judgment. There cannot be no control at all on the opinion of an individual. We cannot all start afresh in life. There is some heritage from the past in experience and thought. This

is true in everything, and necessarily more so in religion. Even the wisest have still to learn of God; the faith of the oldest and wisest rests unceasingly on Jesus.

There are two kinds of authority, the despotic and the fatherly. Despotic authority demands unquestioning obedience by very clear and exact directions. A father's authority works otherwise: it seeks sympathy and co-operation: it loves to leave something to the mind that wishes to obey; it cares not for blind obedience. This is the method of the New Testament. Christ did not reveal natural knowledge or history of past or future: He did not relieve us from acquiring knowledge. Even in spiritual things He is reserved. We still only "know in part." He knew that teaching might be too full, too plain; so He left to His disciples the duty of spiritual effort. They were to be friends, not slaves. His ordinances are sacraments for sons, not laws for servants. Thus He stimulates not merely conscience, but also reason and free judgment. He encourages us to test all things. So Christianity is not satisfied with the bare belief of dogmas, but

desires a community in active co-operation. This is the best kind of authority.

But where does this authority reside? There are two instruments, the Church and the Bible, of Christian teaching. The Christian is first instructed by the Church, and then is to deepen and develop his faith by study of Scripture. The Church is to teach, the Bible to prove.

The Christian authority is simply Jesus Christ. But for our knowledge of what He taught and was we depend on the witness of His Apostles. They are good and sufficient witnesses, but we soon see in them more than witnesses. They are qualified for witness by a special inspiration. Christians believe that they were enlightened to give a truthful record of the person and teaching of our Lord. We cannot go behind them, for He wrote nothing: we do not need to go behind them.

How, then, are we taught by them? By reading the New Testament. But let us remember that the New Testament was written for men who were Christians already. At first Christian teaching was not written: it was committed to the

Christian group of societies as a tradition, as a rule of faith. The first trustee of this Christian tradition was the Church, the "pillar and ground of the truth." But this tradition of the society must be checked. This is done by the New Testament, which is the criterion of our teaching. There is the great catholic society for maintaining and spreading religion. There is the safeguard of the Scriptures to prevent deterioration and narrowness. The Church is ever to teach: the New Testament is ever to prove. The divisions of Christendom and the neglect of Scripture mar the ideal; but it remains our ideal, and both elements in the authority are real.

But there is also the Old Testament to be considered. Our Lord used this as God's word to the Jews. He claimed to fulfil the Old Testament ideal of the Messiah. He claimed for the Law that no jot should be unfulfilled. The Apostle S. Paul commends to us the Old Testament as "given by inspiration of God." There are those who have argued that our Lord's words, "Moses wrote of Me," bind us to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and that His

speaking of the Flood or of Jonah binds us to these narratives as history. To this argument we need not yield. The lessons Christ drew are in the narrative, whatever their authorship or character. Literary forms, as well as moral agents, may be imperfect and yet be aided by the Holy Spirit. Even our Lord's arguments from Psalm cx. do not bind us to a Davidic authorship. He often questioned men so as to force them to examine themselves by their own principles. He stimulated and took an interest in the reasonings of men. He did not thereby commit Himself to them all. The critical and logical principles of men change : they cannot be part of a Catholic religion. They have their use, but they are not part of the infallible words of God. We may not be satisfied with human reasoning, but if, freed from vanity, we morally hold fast to Christ, we shall yet find that He "has the words of eternal life."

VIII

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE AND NEW LIFE

OUR Lord, as Son of man, set the standard of human life. He showed forth a character based on principle rather than rules of conduct. Such rules of conduct as He gave must be explained in the spirit and not in the letter. He puts principles above rule, and the spirit in which life is lived above these acts. His example is for all men, all ranks, all times. It is not that His teaching was vague or unexacting: it is, in fact, the application of principle that is most exacting. By obedience "in the spirit" men have at times meant no obedience at all.

The whole life of Christ was an unbroken act of obedience. With many men obedience to religion is just an occasional restraint. In Christ

manhood found its glory in obeying: "He was obedient unto death." Contrast His self-restraint with our glorification of the undisciplined: His long silent preparation for work with our rapid acceptance of the holiest trusts: His willing suffering with our shrinking from pain: His meekness with our pride: His deliberate self-sacrifice with our selfishness.

But can such a standard appeal to any save a few? We know that it does appeal to the conscience as nothing else does. But its very loftiness appeals indeed to the few: yet that is what He foresaw. "Narrow is the gate," He said, "and straitened the way." It was not so with Mohammed. He appealed to the average moral level of his age. This was why his teaching was so successful: this is why it is unprogressive. But Jesus Christ appeals to the best: seeks that His trained disciples may be "salt" and "light." The Church is to be in the world, but not of it.

To this method many later methods have been fatal. Wholesale conversions; orthodoxy mingled with a frankly pagan morality; stress laid on creed rather than on life: these are not Christian,

but they are easy. Christ claims the life even more than the intellect. When the will is right, the fight is over. But certainly in the middle age and modern Church moral claims have at times been put below theological.

It has been disastrous to have Christianity spread broad and not deep. We see this in social matters. We may not agree with the creed of a compulsory socialism, but there is a Christian socialism that the doctrine of the incarnation brings with it. Christians are bound to restrain competition and mere selfish search for wealth. The law of brotherhood bids us bear one another's burdens. Yet men utter worldly and selfish maxims without any sense that they are denying the Christian creed. We have, in fact, little real conception of what Christian morality means. The Church's present duty is to see that Christians know how they must live at all points that touch on human life. We want the Christian moral law as clearly understood as the dogmas of the Christian creed. Depend upon it, in the Judgment we must face Christ's questions on our investments, our competition, our business life. Tradition and

respectability is not Christianity. Our life can only be Christ's by the courageous acceptance of His law in everything.

For this life the Christian Church supplies the means. Christ gives us more than an example: He gives new life. Christians have a new birth. The Spirit brings Christ into a man's life. For this the Church exists, to be the Spirit-bearing body, perpetuating the presence of the Son of man in the world. The Church is a visible human society; but it exists to receive, to embody, to communicate a spiritual life. This is the life of the incarnate Christ. The Church has, indeed, unworthy members; but she, like England, must be judged by her best. So for each personally when we ask, What is it for me to be a Christian? the answer is, that God's Spirit has entered at definite moments into my innermost being. I have, by sacraments, drawn upon divine resources. Upon them I must draw for my new life, which is, "Christ in me the hope of glory."

This doctrine of the "inward Christ" has been laughed at as only fit for enthusiasts. But every time that a living Christianity is renewed, it

comes again to the front: it is rooted afresh in the minds of serious and devout, even though "plain men," who are no fanatics. It explains three difficulties: First, there is the question, How can the sinless Christ be an example to sinners? It is the traitor in our camp that we fear: He had no such traitor within. Now, if Jesus Christ were only a distant figure in history, His example might not be such an encouragement to-day. It is because He is close to us, entering into the roots of our life, dwelling in us by His Spirit, that His example is so near and helpful. Secondly, we may here see how we share in His merits. Our life is of the same piece with His life. He, our elder brother, is behind us, His people, as a prophecy of good. God rates us at something of His value, because He is the most powerful force at work in us. He deals with us not as we are, but as we are becoming, if only with sincere will we claim to be His servants. Thirdly, because Christ is dwelling in us we learn the work of faith in our lives. Our faith should be, not the faith of one first converted, but of one who has already received and has but to use God's

THE END

THE END

gifts of grace. We have, by gradual effort of will, to use the resources given, that Christ may be formed within us. The grace is given by the sacraments: we have to make it ours and use it. Each gift of God depends for effect upon the faith of intellect and will. We must stir up the gift within us.

Here, then, the witness closes. This it is that links us across the ages with the first Apostles. This it is that has been handed down to us. Faithful Christians of each age have set to their seals that God is true. Once more the document is here offered, black with the signatures, red with the seals of those that are gone. We, too, must confess or deny. Let us summon every heavenly power to aid us in the great surrender which they make who, having steadily in view what is meant by faith in Jesus Christ, set to their seals for time and eternity that God is true.

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